

*I think you'll find
this thoughtful
volume of some
'comfort' from a
respected member of the
military commission
reservations.*

Jue

ON THE TRAIL OF THE QUIXOTIC: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS
ON PROPOSALS TO SPIN OFF THE CLANDESTINE SERVICES

William R. Harris

November 14, 1974

"— fancy curtseying as you're falling through the air!
Do you think you could manage it?"

Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in
Wonderland (1865).

Proposals to disembowel the clandestine services of the Central Intelligence Agency are generally of two sorts: on the one hand are the proposals for euthanasia by surgery, so as to quash in the post-cold war era, whatever it is, the symbols and the remnants of cold war political architecture; on the other hand are found the proposals to "spin off" the clandestine services: to create organization X, or to relocate the clandestine services under management by committee Y. My attention is directed to the latter set of proposals, suggested by those who would reform rather than eliminate the clandestine services.

There appear to be four central reasons for spinning off the clandestine services, if by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or some other means one manages to extract those raisons d'etat from the verbiage of reform. These reasons are, simply put, as follow:

- [1] symbolic bridge-burning;
- [2] systematic exasperation of the problems of clandestine service cover;
- [3] enhanced personnel flexibility; and
- [4] the freeing of DCI managerial opportunity from the burdens of the clandestine services.

There is a fifth reason, which is not listed because it is a nonstarter upon even cursory examination: enhancing the personnel opportunities of the analytic side of the house, by dissociation from the clandestine services. First, the evidence does not suggest that the clandestine service nexus is, from a recruitment perspective, substantially disadvantageous. Most of the waves of recruitment applications follow on the heels of clandestine service publicity; most of the analysts would miss the opportunity to draw upon the clandestine services' resources in support of analytic work. The fifth reason I dismiss as a non-serious piece of décor, an afterthought of slight significance and dubious merit.

The two fundamentally important reasons for "spin off" proposals as a means of policy reform appear to be [1] and [2], cited above.

ON SYMBOLISM: SEEKING THE NEW PATHWAY

"Cheshire Puss.....Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where," said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"— so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865).

Spinning off the clandestine services would constitute a dramatic act of state, a symbolic burning of a bridge to the policies of the cold war.

Are there not, however, alternative sets of symbolic acts, if such are needed, which signal an era of responsible restraint without imposing the cacophony and dollar costs (in an inflationary era) of a spin off? For example, I have proposed requiring, by amendment of the National Security Act of 1947, a legal opinion prior to NSC authorization of clandestine service functions --- symbolic of reasoned restraint, and a growing respect for the rules of international law. Alternatively, public pledges by leading statesmen have symbolic importance. From the garden of symbolic reform there is no special need to pick this particular flower.

ON THE EXASPERBATION OF COVER: DESIGNING THE SUPERIOR TREADMILL

"Well, in our country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else — if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing."

"A slow sort of country!" said the Queen. "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"

Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass (1872).

For some time I was intrigued by the possibility that a spin off would result in better cover, in greater emphasis upon "deep cover" operations, in lower incidences of disclosure, in a more efficacious clandestine service. Gradually it dawned on me that the central purpose of spinning off the clandestine services -- whether or not formally admitted by the proponents* -- was to substitute for failures to "narrow the front" of operations by choice

* "Who destroys illusion in himself and in others, nature punishes tyrannically." J. W. von Goethe, "Die Nature." (1782)

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an incapacitating feedback control mechanism for the undisciplined.

25X1 25X1

2 governmental officials who in their spirited ignorance might be tempted to widen the operational front beyond tolerable limits. Are there not more direct, economical, and candid means by which to narrow the operational front?

As for the enhancement of personnel flexibility, associated with an organizational transformation, there may be a touch of merit in the proposition. There^{is} a geriatric problem with old organizations which may not be fully remediable, even in special cases such as CIA where the Director has powers of termination and pension plan incentives for early retirement. And yet there is a fundamental core of tradecraft expertise which must be maintained, and which is likely to be found in the upper management levels of the clandestine services. Would an organizational transformation be merely a weeding out at the bottom? The marginal advantages of an organizational transformation with respect to personnel policies should not be exaggerated.

With respect to the fourth reason, the freeing of the Director of Central Intelligence from the clutter of clandestine service activity, this too may be valid, but once again there may be less painful mechanisms for achievement of this objective. If the intelligence community, hereafter, requires a manager who is familiar with the analytic issues of intelligence, and not an achiever within that feudal guild housing the brethren of the clandestine services, the management of the clandestine services could be more fully delegated to either the Deputy Director (Operations) or to a Director of the Clandestine Services, operating outside formal Agency auspices but nonetheless operating under the authority of the Director of Central Intelligence.* The separation of the direct management of the clandestine services from the Director of Central Intelligence is quite distinct, ^{from} and probably far preferable to the separation of the clandestine services from either the authority of the Director of Central Intelligence or from the official cover of foreign operations. Third country and deep cover operations may yet be of growing importance, without imposing them as an exclusive remedy for perceived indiscipline among those policy officials who are in need of narrowing the operational front. Alice in Wonderland should remain, after all, a

* See W. R. Harris, Legal Authority for the Conduct and Control of U.S. Foreign Intelligence Activities, October 30, 1974, Appendix 2. story.

DCI/DDCI

Executive Registry

Routing Slip

74-7875

TO:

		ACTION	INFO.			ACTION	INFO.
1	DCI			11	LC		
2	DDCI			12	IG		
3	S/MC			13	Compt		
4	DDS&T			14	Asst/DCI		
5	DDI			15	AO/DCI		
6	DDA			16	Ex/Sec		
7	DDO	✓		17			
8	D/DCI/IC			18			
9	D/DCI/NIO			19			
10	GC			20			

SUSPENSE

Date

Remarks:

Pretty good
no ?

DCI/DDCI

11/25/74

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